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Frank O. Lowden

Governor of Illinois

1919

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the Great War Governor
of Illinois. - - - -

GOVERNOR FRANK O. LOWDEN

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Late in the '60's a seven-year-old boy trudged behind his father's prairie schooner across the unsettled country from Minnesota to Iowa. The rough roads cut his bare feet, the brambles ripped his blue jeans.

But he was game.

Ten years before, this boy's father had taken another long journey with his family from Pennsylvania to Minnesota, where he earned a living as a countryside blacksmith. Lorenzo Lowden was the father's name. Of course you have guessed that the son who was born three years later, and who so bravely tramped behind the prairie schooner when still a mere child, was Frank Orren Lowden, Governor of Illinois.

A new home in a cabin, was established in Hardin County, on the Iowa prairies. The senior Lowden farmed, his son helping him and at the same time striving hard to get an education. As was the case of the frontier boy, he had few opportunities to study and attend school. At fifteen, however, he had made such good use of his time that he obtained a school, which he taught for five years.

EARNED HIS OWN EDUCATION

A fine education was his goal. His salary as a teacher was so small that he undertook the cleaning up of his own school room to earn a few extra dollars. Saving and studying, he managed to save money to enter the University of Iowa when twenty years old. His money ran out and he was compelled to get another school. He succeeded in keeping up his studies so he was able to return to the university, from which he was graduated at the head of his class.

The first goal attained, his eyes turned to another—a legal degree. By teaching in Burlington, Iowa, and working

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MRS. FRANK O. LOWDEN

as a law clerk at $8 a week in Chicago, to which he came in 1886, he made his way through the Union College of Law, now Northwestern. He was graduated in 1887, having completed the work of the two-year course in one year. Here again he was valedictorian of his class, receiving the first prize for his oration and the first prize for scholarship.

WINS SUCCESS IN CHICAGO

In the same year he was examined for admission to the bar by the committee of the Appellate Court for the First District of Illinois and outranked all who at that time took the examination. Admitted to the practice of law, the next eight years were filled with work—hard and trying as the previous years. Success, however, was assured by his early training. The boy of the prairie was more than able to hold his own among the brilliant minds practicing law in Chicago.

Along with those qualities indispensable to the lawyer—a keen, rapid, logical mind, plus the business sense, and a ready capacity for hard work—he brought to the starting point of his legal career rarer gifts—eloquence of language and a strong personality. An excellent presence, an earnest, dignified manner, marked strength of character, a thorough grasp of the law, and the ability accurately to apply its principles were factors in Colonel Lowden's effectiveness as an advocate.

In 1896 he was married to Miss Florence Pullman, daughter of one of America's greatest business men—the late George M. Pullman of the Pullman Company. One son and three daughters were born to them.

LOWDEN ENTERS POLITICS

A new period of his life now opens. Popular, brilliant and untiring, he turned his attention to politics. He entered the presidential campaign and devoted his great speaking ability to electing William McKinley President of the United States. After the election President McKinley offered him a high office in Washington, but Colonel Lowden

was not ready to abandon his profession. In 1903 friends urged him to seek the nomination for Governor of Illinois. After a terrific campaign and a convention lasting twenty-one days he was defeated by Charles S. Deneen. In the campaign following the convention Colonel Lowden devoted his time to the election of Mr. Deneen to the governorship.

GOES BACK TO THE FARM

The call of the soil from which he came as a western pioneer always had sounded sweet in his ears. In 1900 he purchased a farm in Ogle County in the beautiful Rock River Valley, near the town of Oregon. To it he moved his family, with a view to making it his permanent home.

But his neighbors were not content to let him rest in peace. They drafted him in 1906 and sent him to Congress to represent the Thirteenth District in the National House of Representatives. He served them two terms, retiring voluntarily to regain his health and devote his energies to the development of the great agricultural resources of his farm, which he named Sinnissippi Farm.

Colonel Lowden was a hard worker in Congress, as he always had been in everything. He voted for the bill limiting the hours of labor of train crews, the employers' liability act, the act regulating child labor in the District of Columbia, the measure establishing a bureau of mines and the bill creating the postal savings bank system. He supported a constitutional amendment providing for an income tax. He delivered a notable speech advocating publicity in connection with the big industries of the country.

GOES ON NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Colonel Lowden retired from politics after two terms, but his party required his services, and in 1908 he was elected national committeeman for Illinois, serving in that capacity for eight years.

All this while his unflagging interest in agriculture was manifest. He increased his farm acreage. He was also

FLORENCE LOWDEN

raising cotton in Arkansas and Texas and attending to his big business interests. Between overseeing the development of his lands, the breeding of fine stock, dairying, road building and planting 500,000 pines on Sinnissippi Farm he was a very busy man.

Colonel Lowden was not so engrossed, however, that he could not devote some of his great energies to aiding his fellow man. He gave liberally to deserving causes. He aided in the development of a vocational or training school for youth at Pullman—a magnificent, useful institution. He served as trustee of numerous small colleges that needed his ability in their develop ment. The young man struggling for an education found a sympathetic and wise counselor in him because he remembered his own hardships.

HAS ABLE LIEUTENANT IN MRS. LOWDEN

In his work he has a strong supporter in Mrs. Lowden, whose unostentatious charities have endeared her not only to the countryside but to the poor of Chicago. She built and furnished two cottages which she called Hilltop on the farm overlooking the beautiful Rock River. To this haven crippled and orphaned boys and girls were taken from Chicago hospitals and tenements, and kept until they regained their health before being sent back to the crowded districts of the city.

The children were in charge of trained nurses. They had the freedom of the farm. Swings and merry-go-rounds

amused them. They lived on the best farm fare. In summer they were driven about in automobiles. In winter they were given sleigh rides behind horses with jingling bells. Many found health, peace and happiness at Hilltop. Few ever heard of this quiet work of Mrs. Lowden. In fact, it was carried on so quietly that hundreds of persons visited Sinnissippi Farm annually without ever hearing of Hilltop.

PROTECTOR OF BIRDS

What can be accomplished by the fostering and protection of birds may be seen on the farm of Colonel Lowden. Not only are the broad acres a legally protected game preserve under the terms of a lease to the State of Illinois but the owner's interest in outdoor life, whether feathered or furred, has led him to install many devices for the comfort of his wild "tenants."

PULLMAN LOWDEN

In fact, the birds can hardly be called wild, since the entire absence of shooting, robbing of nests and other forms of persecution have so banished their natural fears that they show little timidity in the near presence of human beings.

This collection of birds has afforded ornithologists a fine place of observation, and several visit the farm yearly to pursue their studies. In a record kept by Governor Lowden more than eighty species have been listed as found in his forests, fields and shrubbery. While a few of these are migrants, most of them are known to nest.

A remarkable result of the system of feeding and protection is that the cardinal, whose usual habitat is much farther south, not only is a regular summer visitor and breeder, but also has been known to remain through the winter. This is doubtless because Colonel and Mrs. Lowden always provide suet and other food for the birds throughout the cold season.

IS ELECTED GOVERNOR

The people of Illinois—a majority of them, at least—were not willing that Colonel Lowden should remain on his farm, where he finds so much happiness. They wanted him for their Governor. After a year of insistence he became a candidate for the Republican nomination. On September 13 the primaries were held. He was nominated by a plurality of 120,214, or a majority of 34,711. On November 7 he was swept into office by a tremendous vote—a majority of 149,842.

HARRIET LOWDEN

A statement he made after the election is typical of the man. "I do not wish," he said, "to prophesy an Augustan era for the state during my administration. I do not care to boast of high ideals. But I have definite views regarding certain changes in the administration of state affairs. Many evils have crept into the state government which I believe I shall be able to remedy. I am going to give Illinois an honest, efficient and economical administration. To do this I propose to surround myself with the ablest lieutenants it is in my power to select.

"I will hold my appointees to as high a degree of efficiency in the public service as is exacted from men in the employ of the best managed private businesses. When I make an appointment that man's whole duty from that moment will be to the public. I will have that definitely understood at the start."

Colonel Lowden actively interests himself in public affairs and participates earnestly in an effort to propagate a spirit of patriotism and of loyalty to America. In politics he has always been a staunch Republican. In his religious opinions Colonel Lowden is liberal and tolerant. He is a regular attendant at church and was a close and devoted friend of Professor David Swing during the lifetime of that divine.

Socially Colonel Lowden occupies a prominent place. Possessing a high degree of good fellowship, he is an active member of many societies and clubs. A vigorous physique and intellect enable him to attend adequately to the social side of life without neglecting the cultivation of the mind. He is a constant reader of the best literature and is an unusually apt classical scholar.

BOTH STUDENT AND ORATOR

The same qualifications which gained for Colonel Lowden his reputation as an advocate, supplemented by broad sympathies and a fine culture, won for him recognition as a public speaker; and his presence on the platform or at a speakers' table is much in demand.

His gift as an orator is peculiar, in its wideness of range; he has been equally successful as political campaigner, after-dinner speaker and war orator.

From the prairies of Minnesota and Iowa in the '60s to the state capitol at Springfield as chief executive of more than six millions of people is a long journey.

But a crowning achievement.

LOWDEN AS GOVERNOR

Upon assuming the duties of his office January 8, 1917, Governor Lowden immediately turned his attention to the great things in the program he had promised the people. Foremost among them was the consolidation of 125 commissions, boards and bureaus into nine major departments with a director at the head of each who would be required to live in Springfield and give his entire time to the state. Before he had been in office sixty days this consolidation act had passed both houses of the General Assembly, and become a law.

In addition to abolishing many useless agencies and improving the efficiency of existing divisions, the new law, called The Civil Administrative Code, provided for making a budget in the Department of Finance and its presentation to the Legislature by the Governor. Upon his appointment, July 1, 1917, the Director of Finance and his assistants began the study of the finances of the state. Their work was so well done that when the taxing body, consisting of the Governor, the State Treasurer, and the Auditor of Public Accounts, met in December, 1918, they were able to present such an accurate report of the finances that—notwithstanding the United States had been at war twenty-two months and war prices had prevailed—the tax rate was reduced from 90 to 75 cents on the $100 taxable valuation. This meant a saving of $4,000,000 to the tax-payers of the state. Efficiency in the nine departments, more accurate knowledge of the state's needs and constant watchfulness over expenditures contributed toward this saving.

BUSINESS GUMPTION IN STATE AFFAIRS

The effectiveness of the new organization was shown in a saving of $150,000 in traveling expenses, notwithstanding higher railroad fare and increased prices at the hotels. There was a saving of $90,656 in printing where there usually had been a deficit. The nine departments showed $1,710,175 unexpended appropriations which more than over-

balanced a deficiency in the Department of Public Welfare which contains all the charitable and penal institutions of the State. Considering that appropriations had been made on the same basis as those of 1915–16, the showing was remarkable.

FRANCES LOWDEN

Illinois needed a new constitution, the present constitution having been adopted in 1870. The Governor recommended that a resolution be passed by the Legislature submitting to the people the question of whether or not they wanted a new constitution. The Legislature concurred in the recommendation, and the people voted in November, 1918, by 74,239 majority to call a constitutional convention. This convention will be held in 1920.

GOOD ROADS FOR ILLINOIS

For fifteen years Illinois had been trying to get out of the mud. Governor Lowden recommended a $60,000,000 bond issue to build 4,800 miles of roads. Both interest and principal are to be paid from fees received from automobile licenses. The Legislature approved the suggestion and it was submitted to the people. At the November, 1918, election by a constitutional majority of 212,404 they said they wanted good roads. Since then the Illinois idea has taken and many other states are submitting bond issues under the same conditions.

One of the great abuses that had been a source of constant annoyance in the city of Chicago was the starting of

wildcat or private banks. Any individual could paint the word "bank" on his door and accept the funds of his neighbors without supervision from the state. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were lost in this way. Governor Lowden recommended state supervision for all private banks, and notwithstanding the opposition of a powerful lobby the bill was passed. Upon submission to the people at the November election it was approved by a large vote.

A REAL WAR GOVERNOR

When war was declared by President Wilson February 3, 1917, Governor Lowden issued a statement to the people of Illinois in which he declared "It is the solemn duty of all Americans to rally to his support." Three days later he went before the Legislature in joint session and said to its members,"We may have many sympathies; we can have but one allegiance and that allegiance is to the United States."

Illinois was regarded by the Washington authorities as dangerous territory, perhaps the most critical of any state in the Union. Governor Lowden appointed a State Council of Defense representing all parties and elements. That council made a remarkable record. With only $50,000 appropriated by the state it did work that in some states cost $5,000,000 and achieved efficiency that placed it in the van. It raised and equipped 15,000 Home Guards besides sending thousands of fairly well trained young men into the service where they obtained immediate recognition as non-commissioned officers.

Governor Lowden visited the Illinois troops in camps and spoke to them. He bade them goodbye at the seaboard, sending them on their mission with cheering and inspiring words. One of the regiments—the old First Illinois National Guard, subsequently the 131st Infantry—was the regiment of which he was Lieutenant Colonel for three years. In the Prairie Division to which the 131st was assigned was his own son Pullman, who wears the gold of overseas service upon his sleeve. Illinois sent 314,504 of

its fine young men into the service. The records of their gallantry will be read in the history of the western front—Argonne Forest and St. Mihiel.

NEW ISSUES ABSORB HIM

When the Fifty-first General Assembly met January 8, 1919, the House of Representatives was organized the first day. Within a week both bodies had ratified the dry amendment to the federal constitution—Illinois being the twenty-first state, as it was the twenty-first to enter the Union. His program and that of his party was written into law at the first session. Reconstruction and the betterment of the lot of the average man are two great issues that are absorbing the Governor. His own future bothers him little. He always has said that if a public official is fair to the people, the people will look after his interests. He is absorbed in the study of new issues and the great problems that are now confronting the state and nation. In his message to the 1919 General Assembly the Governor recommended a waterway from Chicago to St. Louis; a general revision of the revenue laws; a reduction in the cost of primaries and elections; an adequate law for corporations; larger powers for courts, and an eight-hour day for women. He suggested a state housing code; greater development of agriculture with a land tenure act; the planting of trees and the reorganization of all state and municipal pension systems.

Home of Frank O. Lowden near Oregon, Ill.

FRANK O. LOWDEN

Born January 26, 1861, Sunrise, Minnesota.
Moved to Hardin County, Iowa, 1868.
Taught school from 15 to 20.
Valedictorian '85 class, Iowa State University.
Law Clerk, Dexter, Herrick & Allen, Chicago.
Valedictorian '87 class, Union College of Law (now Northwestern).
President Alumni Association and trustee Northwestern University for several years.
Trustee University of Chicago and Knox College, Galesburg, several years.
1896—April 29th, married Miss Florence Pullman, daughter of George M. Pullman. Have four children—one son and three daughters.
1898—Formed law partnership—Lowden, Estabrook & Davis. Mr. Lowden's law practice was extensive and varied. He was one of the most successful trial lawyers in Chicago. He was an able counsellor and a convincing speaker. He occupied the chair of Federal Jurisprudence in Northwestern Law School. Lowden Hall was named after him for his services.
Elected Lieutenant Colonel, First Regiment, Illinois National Guard.
1900—Delegate to Republican National Convention.
1904—Candidate for Republican nomination for Governor. Defeated by combination of Yates-Deneen forces on 79th ballot, on which Mr. Deneen was nominated.
1904–1912—Republican National Committeeman for Illinois and member of executive body of National Committee.
1906—Member of Congress from the 13th district until March, 1911. Voluntarily retired.
1900—Purchased Hemenway Farm, now Sinnissippi Farm, on Rock River, near Oregon, Ill. Devoted fifteen years to development of farm along practical lines, dairying, livestock breeding, general farming and tree culture.
1916—Elected Governor of Illinois.
1917—Inaugurated Governor, January 8th.